

HEAVY LOSSES BY BURNING OF THE HALL BUILDING



The Wreck at Daybreak.

(From Wednesday's daily.)

WHAT WAS the magnificent Hall building at Fort and King streets is now a complete wreck. A mass of blackened walls, standing only one story high in Fort street, a tangle of beams and columns filling the basement to the level of the street, charred timbers and broken bricks along the sidewalks, mark the spot where stood the newly occupied home of one of the oldest business houses in the city.

The losses are confined principally to two firms, there being several neighbors who suffered from the breaking of glass and from slight fires close to the windows. The principal losses and their insurance are as follows:

Firm	Loss Insurance
E. O. Hall & Son, Ltd.	\$140,000 \$90,000
Lewers & Cooke	\$20,000 \$20,000

The fire which wrought the havoc was one of the fiercest and most rapid in action Honolulu has ever seen. First discovered about 4 o'clock, within an hour it had reduced the building in which it first appeared, and damaged surrounding structures and stocks before the entire department got control of the blaze. The origin of the fire is in doubt, but as there were no live wires in the building at the time, the belief is that it was spontaneous combustion, starting in some of the oil-soaked waste or rags used about the oil department or in the bicycle rooms, the destruction must be attributed.

The fire was discovered by the newsboys of the Advertiser. The lads had gathered to take out the morning paper when two of them, Simpson and King, discovered the flames in the Waikiki end of the ground floor. King took to his bicycle while Simpson cried "Fire!" and the alarm was carried to the police station, whence it was transmitted to the fire-house. Immediately there was a response from the central engines, and as the fire had control of the entire ground floor of the building by the time Fire Chief Thurston arrived he called the Makiki force to assist in the fight.

When at first seen the flames were most fierce in the Waikiki end of the ground floor. Whether or not they had eaten their way up the elevator shaft, is mere conjecture. It was in that end of the building that the stocks of oils, the paints and the majority of the bicycle lubricants were kept. There the oils were handled and the floors, though kept as clean as possible, were more or less covered with the leakage and loss in handling. There, too, were kept the waste and rags with which the oil containers were cleaned and the floors wiped free from oil. It is now presumed that the ignition of some of these pieces of cloth caused the fire and the proximity of the inflammables induced rapid spread through the building.

It was not more than a quarter-hour after the alarm had been turned in that the interior of the structure was a furnace, and the firemen had to turn their attention to adjoining buildings. The engines had been disposed upon their arrival at the nearest points in the flames. One engine was left at Fort and Hotel and the largest was put at Bethel and King streets. An attempt was made to get the engine down Fort street, but the flames which poured from the windows was too much for the horses and they would not draw it past the furnace. The third was put in King street east of the fire and with the six streams which were thus afforded the deluging of the adjacent structures went on. From the nearness of the lumber yards of Lewers & Cooke the first attack was made from that side. Then the Fort street store of the same firm was seen to be on fire and two streams were put on the roof to prevent the flames getting a foothold. Two more streams of water were kept playing upon the buildings across the streets, at one time both of them being concentrated upon the Hobron Drug Company establishment.

Once the alarm had been sounded the streets began to be filled with spectators. The fire was most brilliant and lighted up the entire district, putting the moon out of business, and attracting the attention of people who did not hear the alarm whistle. The crowds began to come in singles, couples and then in swarms, until the police, gathered from all over the city, had work out for them in keeping back the people who, eager to see, were for get-

ting into the front row all the time. There were picturesque costumes, men who by day are the glass of fashion appearing in pajamas and trousers without coats and in slippers, while a holoiki did duty for street attire for many a woman who wears it only in the house elsewhere.

There was a most brilliant spectacle while the flames were leaping high above the buildings, but soon after the fire got to its highest there were a series of explosions which drove back the people. In the Waikiki end of the building were kept the various stores of cartridges, and these began to explode with rapidity. When the plate-glass windows fell out from the extreme heat, there was a clear field for the target practice, and the cases of shells began to pour a fire upon the walls of the burning building and the surrounding ones as well. Many cartridges were thrown out into the street without exploding, by the force of the explosions of others, and all day yesterday there were crowds of lads and men gathering them as souvenirs. One ball went through the window of the new McIntyre block, others through glass on Fort street, while many persons in the crowd said they heard the whizzing of bullets about them as they stood and watched the blaze.

With a crash the King street wall of the building fell about 4:30 o'clock. There had been burning a fierce fire all the time along that side of the building, the force of the flames seeming to be muffled, as there was no wind blowing, the trades having been turned off for the occasion, thus saving perhaps the entire block. The firemen had seen the swaying of the wall under the vigor of the flames and there was none of them along the side of the building. Bricks and terra cotta were strewn across King street, some of the fragments being thrown into the enclosure around the McIntyre building. This marked the top-notch of the fire, as from that time it was declining, the fuel which had been exhausted, and the efforts of the firemen being rewarded in keeping it within the bounds set for it.

The best work was done by the firemen on the Lewers & Cooke building, where several times there was a fierce blaze. One-half the roof of the building was destroyed, and in fighting the flames the water was poured through the roof and down through the floors, destroying much of the stock. There was a shortage of ladders, the department not being regularly supplied with any at all, and there was much delay in getting to this work. The springs of hose had to be drawn up to the roof by a hand-line let down by a fireman who had stumbled up the stairs and made his way out on the top any way possible. There was some valuable time lost in this way, but it was not enough to have enabled the firemen to prevent the damaging of this building to some extent.

There were times when it appeared that the Lewers & Cooke block would take fire, and once the flames had secured a foothold there, there would have been little hope of saving the building, as there was such a stock of papers, paints and oils as would have furnished a most spectacular display. There was some damage done by the flames in the upper story of the building, but this was very little in comparison with what was wrought by the water. The stock of high-class shelf hardware is very susceptible to the water and this was deluged by the two streams which played through the roof for an hour. Wall papers were soaked and rendered useless and brushes and other light goods were put out of business entirely.

Across Fort street the fire swept several times, setting fire to exposed wood-work and by the heat breaking through all the plate-glass windows. At the Golden Rule Bazaar, where the windows were filled with books the glass was broken early in the morning and the volumes were often soaked by the water from the continuous streams which were played upon the various store fronts. Loss there will be in the neighborhood of \$50, the greatest part of this being upon the plate-glass windows.

The Hobron Drug Company lost more heavily than any other on that side of Fort street, as the fire was so hot that the windows were broken and then the flames attacked the light stock in boxes in the second story of the building. The clerks who had arrived

down upon the blaze. These stayed, many of them, until there was no more to be seen, and for most of the good people the day began at 4 o'clock yesterday, and there was no further rest.

The principal loss was that of E. O. Hall & Son, Limited, in whose building the fire broke out. On stock and building the loss will reach something like \$140,000. The building was one which was erected by the firm last year, at a cost of above \$50,000 and fitted for their business at an additional expense of \$10,000. The building was built upon leased property, the lease having yet eighteen years to run. As soon as the debris can be cleared away the erection of a new building on the old site will begin. The new building was decided upon at a meeting of the board of directors of the company yesterday morning, there being present Messrs. W. W. Hall, E. H. Paris, A. J. Campbell and B. Cartwright. While nothing can be announced definitely concerning

it, the directors say it will not be as fine a structure as that which was destroyed yesterday morning. The short life of the lease would render this inadvisable, and the structure, while it may be on the same general plan, will not be so highly ornate. It was decided also, at the meeting, that for the present the retail business of the corporation would be given up and all attention turned to the wholesale division. The firm's warehouse, in Allen street is filled with hardware, so that there will be no delays in filling any orders which may come in. The office of the company for the present will be in the rooms over the Hawaiian Trust and Investment Company, but the business in general will be done at the Allen street house. Mr. Hall called the forty employees of the house together at the warehouse yesterday morning, and apprised them of the decision of the firm to discontinue the retail business for the present, as there was no available storeroom in which the firm wishes to open out again. He said that the force would be decreased to about eight men, and that the names of those who would be retained would be announced today. In time he hoped to have all the old staff about him once more.

MR. HALL'S STATEMENT.
Mr. Hall said yesterday in discussing the fire: "I have no theory as to its origin upon which I place any weight. Some persons think it might have come from our independent lighting system. There was not a live wire in the place at the time. We had a plant with a gasoline engine. Then we had an auxiliary system with the current from the electric company. But the engine was not running, the electric company had not made its connections, so that there was no way in which there might have been any current which could have caused a fire. The wiring was put in with care and has been overhauled recently. As to gasoline there was none in the house. The gasoline for the engine was stored in a tank which was located outside of the walls, under the pavement. There is a door leading to this vault and you can see not only that the sidewalk is in shape, but as well that the door has not been opened. This would dispose of any theory that there had been a fire from the explosion of gasoline. There may have been a lighted cigarette or cigar in the packing room, though that is impossible."

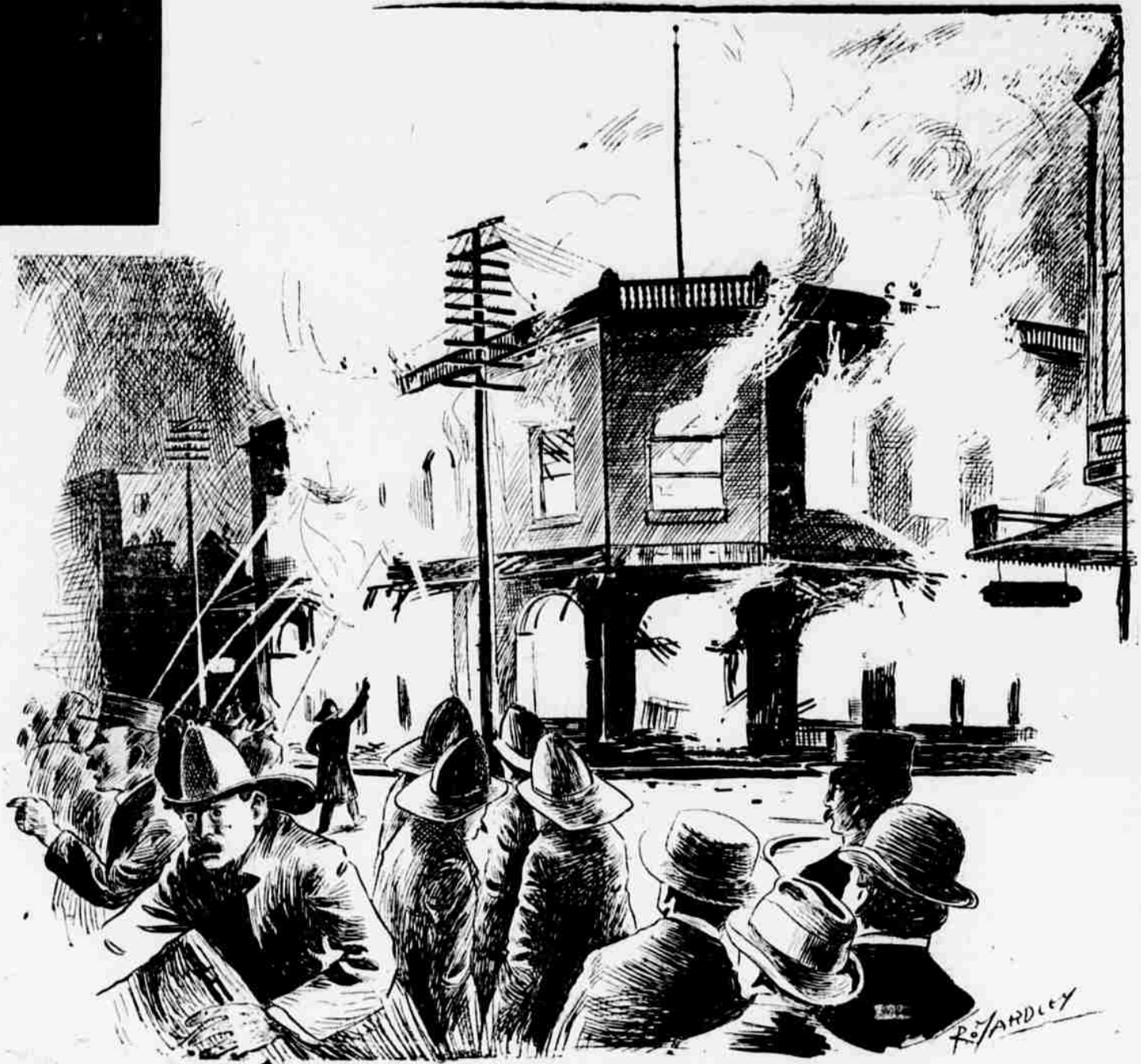
"We carried no more explosives or oil in stock than the law allows. For instance, we had perhaps less than fifty

pounds of powder, not a full box of dynamite and not more than ten cases of kerosene, perhaps not half that amount. We had a large stock of cartridges and these made the noise of the explosions which were heard."

"As to the loss, we had the store fitted up in the finest style, the best store in the city, I think, at a cost of about \$62,000. As to our stock, we had some where in the neighborhood of \$75,000 worth in the building. We had of bicycle goods alone \$10,000, and there was a large stock of new things just opened, which would add to the value of the shelf goods. We have insurance of \$91,000 on stock and store building, \$30,000 on the latter. We will go on with our wholesale business. Since I came down town today I have had the most gratifying assurances of sympathy and aid, from people who mean what they say, too. Every one has told me that they join in the regret that the loss of our building causes, that it was an ornate

electric light wires made a merry scare for a time. It was with a flash and burning that the wires came in contact, but strangely, where there were so many people on the streets, there was not one hurt by these falling wires. The police asked that the lighting company take off its current for a time, but this was not done, so that the trouble was kept up until the end of the fire-fighting. It was claimed yesterday that there was only a light current on the wires, but there was sufficient to furnish many pretty illuminations as the copper burned from the high current."

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.
Fire Chief Thurston had a merry time from the announcement of the fire until late yesterday afternoon. Speaking of the fire last evening he said: "As soon as we arrived I found that the chemical engine was of no use and stationed the large engines where they



Fighting the Fire Soon After it Broke Out.

would do the most good. We began to throw water where we might save surrounding property, for from the first there seemed no chance to do anything for the Hall building, as it had its doom sealed. I never saw a fire which made such progress. It simply walked through the building. When we saw it first it seemed to be confined to the Waikiki end of the ground floor, but it took only a few minutes to have it all over the building and to make it impossible to save anything. So we began to throw streams on the other buildings. We had some hard times of it for the fire was fierce in every way. It was so hot that the horses would not draw the engines near it and we had to station them off a block.

"One thing which was shown to be necessary was that we have the use of ladders at once. The Legislature put into the appropriation bill an item for a hook and ladder outfit but there was no provision for the salaries of the men to handle it. We shall try and make some arrangement for it. The need was shown when we had to send men to the roof of the Lewers & Cooke building and then drop light ropes to send up the lines of hose. The men made a brave fight to save the surrounding property, and that we were so successful must be laid in part to the fact that there was little wind blowing. Had there been a high wind there would have been difficulty in keeping the fire within bounds. I have not completed my investigation of the cause but there may be something in the theory that the blaze started from combustion in some old oil-soaked rags."

"We were in very good shape, for while we had all the active engines at work, with the exception of the chemical, we had two here in shape for work but which were not called out. The only thing which we would need to make them of use would be crews to work them, and this we would have to furnish from volunteers. Altogether we did well with the material at hand and had great fortune in saving all the surrounding property."

INSURANCE ADJUSTMENT.
The adjustment of the insurance upon the fire-swept places will be made immediately upon the return from Maui of Secretary Guery of the Board of Underwriters. Mr. Guery was telegraphed for yesterday at Kahului by Acting Secretary John S. Walker. A message was sent also to the steamer Helene to call at Maalaea Bay, which can be

ment to the city. With these expressions of good-will we feel that we can hope for good trade in the future.

"We will not try to open somewhere else with a retail store, but will simply wait for the reopening of our new building. We will begin building as soon as the debris is cleared away. We will not make such an expenditure upon the structure as before, but will put up a good building. We are known at the stand there and shall not think of going any place else. Meantime we shall keep up our general business, filling all orders given us, and keeping down our expenses by retaining only those who are absolutely needed, principally the heads of departments."

LEWERS & COOKE'S LOSSES.

Second in the point of loss is the firm of Lewers & Cooke. The burning of the roof and the drenching of the stock will cause an amount of damage which will reach nearly the full sum of the insurance. The estimate of the amount of stock made by Mr. F. W. Lowrey is \$20,000 and upon this there is \$17,500 of insurance. All damage to the building is fully covered. The loss on the stock will be absolute in so far as the wall paper is concerned. There will be some salvage on the stock of paints and oils, and also on some of the hardware and the nails. It is thought this will bring the total loss well inside the amount of insurance. There will be little delay to business on the part of this firm as well. Before the Hall ruins had stopped smoking, the firm had taken the room in the Ewa end of the Stangenwald block and had removed there the books of the firm and had a force of clerks at work getting out orders. There is in the warehouse of the corporation a full supply of all the goods that it handles, there being no difficulty in filling any order, except perhaps some for high-class wall paper, but new stocks are being ordered at once, so that there will be practically no stoppage of business.

There was some small losses in the Pacific Hardware Company from water in the cellar.